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SECRET [redacted]

25X1

5 July 1988

NOTE FOR: [redacted] 25X1

Kate Hall

FROM: C/NIC

SUBJECT: Comments on Basing Estimate

These comments apply specifically to the Key Judgments but they might be kept in mind as the main text is coordinated.

Even though they are already a bit longish (not really for this kind of report), I think the following thoughts need to be in the first paragraph of the KJs.

If we get blown out of one of the major "at risk" locations during the next five years (e.g., Philippines), it would be a big political and military blow and it could greatly accelerate already adverse trends.

In discussing the "hidden messages" of the estimate, [redacted] pointed out a Key Judgment lurking beneath the surface which, I think, we ought to try to write out and coordinate...at least to see what happens. If I understand him correctly, it goes like this: In Third World basing countries and less developed NATO allies, money ("rent") is the main concern of the hosts. They will strive harder for more; and be increasingly unhappy with less. For a time, perhaps the timeframe of the estimate, we can hang on through hard bargaining, but probably with increasing constraints on our freedom of use. Over time, however, host appetites/needs will clash increasingly with US fiscal parsimony; bargaining will become fiercer and nastier. Eventually dissatisfactions on the part of both hosts and lodger will shift in the direction of issues of "principle" (sovereignty, nuclear, political estrangement), which have a higher likelihood of driving us out. 25X1

If we can get such a judgment coordinated, we would really have a high-impact estimate, telling the policymaker to get cracking now on plans for budget increases, retrenchment, or major alternatives. If we cannot coordinate this judgment, then we should try to coordinate its opposite: We can hang on to most of our access indefinitely by haggling skillfully over the rent and accepting ever tighter constraints on use. One or the other has to be true, no? Or must we say explicitly that we simply cannot tell which of these crucial propositions is true?

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In the listing of countries at risk, I am still troubled by the repeated use of "among." This wording suggests that the list is longer, perhaps much longer, but that we lack the conviction to decide who's on it and who's not. I recommend reviewing the listed countries, adding any that display the syndrome involved and getting "among" out in all cases.

I think the subtitle, "Issues Transcending Regional Boundaries", isn't quite right. The issues don't transcend, do they? Rather they are spreading, even contagious, motives for challenging US access. Why not just call it "Spreading Motivations for Challenging US Access"?

This section seems a little anemic for lack of specific countries, although many are named in the preceding subsection. Why not put this general section right after the introductory paragraph and then follow with the countries secure/at risk?

I have a hunch this estimate is going to cause quite a stir. In view of NSC interest expressed, what's the prognosis for an accelerated completion? In any case, let's get a revised memo to the DCI and DDCI suggesting that the judgments on specific countries could provoke controversy among their Washington "patrons" and that the general judgments could be quite important to overall US defense strategy in the years ahead. Hence this seemingly mundane estimate could prove to be more controversial and also useful than perhaps initially thought, so the front office should pay it some attention.

Fritz W. Ermarth

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